

A Coveney & Wardy Hill Scrapbook 1897 to 1990

Facts, Features and (occasional) Fallacies  
reported in Cambridge Newspapers

summarised by

Mike Petty

Many of these stories were featured in my 'Looking Back' column in the Cambridge News from 1996-2014. They are supplemented by some selections 'From our Old Files' published in the Cambridge Independent Press and other notes.

The complete 'Cambridgeshire Scrapbooks' of which this is a small section is published online at [bit.ly/CambsCollection](http://bit.ly/CambsCollection)

I have digital and other copies of most of the stories summarised.  
I hope to publish these online one day. If you would like them in the meantime then please get in touch.

The original volumes are housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library where there are many other indexes dating back to 1770.

They also have detailed newspaper cuttings files on over 750 topics that have been compiled since the 1960s.

Newspapers sometimes get things wrong. I copy things out incorrectly. Do check

There are a multitude of spelling and layout errors. Please forgive or correct them

News never stops but this file was finished on 31 August 2016.

I will maintain supplements and corrections – contact me for anything you need

Please make what use of these notes that you may. Kindly remember where they came from

See my website – [www.mikepetty.org.uk](http://www.mikepetty.org.uk) for further notes.

Mike Petty, Stretham

2016

1899 06 06

A Gentleman seeks to erect an obelisk over his wife's grave in Coveney churchyard, with the inscription, "Peace, perfect peace". The Rector objects to the obelisk because it is pagan, and to the inscription because it is not taken from the Holy Bible. He is within his legal rights. Many a beautiful cemetery is defaced by the monstrosities of the tombstone maker, and many inscriptions are inane, silly, and even actively irreverent.

1899 06 08

Sir - I believe that if the Rector of Coveney were to attend more to those hearts that are broken by reason of bereavement, and a little less to the design of tombstones and the wording of inscriptions, more peace would be realised by the sorrowing ones who have to bury their loved ones in his churchyard. One parishioner has on two occasions had to change the inscriptions that the friends of the dead would liked to have had on the tombstones of their loved ones. If things are to go on like this I don't think we can look for "perfect peace" just yet at Coveney – H. Westcombe.

1899 10 13

Sir : A beautiful white marble monument, standing some ten feet high was taken to be erected in Coveney churchyard. The rector refused to admit it, as he said its shape, an obelisk, was heathen and that the words 'Peace, perfect peace' were not suitable. However he allowed the mason to place it in the enclosure and after it had laid there some 100 days some good friends of the deceased assisted in erecting it in the early hours of the morning. There it remained for twelve weeks, when the rector, with the assistance of another, hurled it down. He was caught in the act by two women. In his sermon he said he would like to put his arms round that wretched monument and carry it out of the churchyard, only it was too massive. Others say the churchyard looks neglected, like some wilderness in a deserted plague-stricken century. – X

1900 02 14

What is hoped to be the final stage of the Coveney churchyard scandal was reached at the Ely County Court. It was alleged that the rector had wrongfully removed a certain tombstone in the churchyard, damaging it and disposed it to his own use. He would now give up the piece of the monument in his possession and the plaintiff proceed to its erection at his own cost. No one would refer to this matter in time to come and parties will abstain from writing to the public press again.

1900 06 05

The Coveney obelisk has been re-erected in the parish churchyard at the spot where it stood before being overthrown by order of the rector. Amid the peacefulness of the notorious little burial ground it is hard to imagine the controversy and ill-feelings which for some time raged and which culminated in litigation. On Monday the monument was erected in its proper position whilst the Rector watched the operations without raising any objections.

1900 08 04

The annual report on the maintenance of main roads and footpaths in the Isle of Ely shows that the paths at Wilburton have been kerbed with blue Staffordshire kerbing & made up with gravel. At Coveney the road has been widened by the Wesleyan Chapel & the Lt Downham road (Little street) has been widened eight feet and made up with granite and slag. The fencing at Gilgal has been continued for a further 80 yards and a length of tar paving laid by the reading room at Doddington.

1905 08 29

The Rector of Coveney, Rev Charles Turner, has closed his church except during the hours for service because of the visits of hatless women. Sightseeing, archaeology and snap-shooting are subsidiary to worship and prayer; general conversation, giggling and general moral hatlessness are utterly unbecoming and out of place, he says. Some weeks ago a party of well-dressed girls wanted to have the keys of the church and on being asked if they wanted to say their prayers burst out laughing. 05 08 29e

1906 08 24

The landlady of the Horse and Gate, Wentworth served two customers and went into the garden; on return she saw them running down the road. She found that two sixpences and a shilling's worth of copper which was kept in a little bowl on a table just inside the cellar, had been taken. PC Turner found one man in a drove at Coveney with tenpence in his pocket: he had thrown the bowl into a ditch. He was a deserter from Sunderland and was sentenced to 14 days hard labour. 06 08 24a

1908 03 24

Coveney farmer accident Drake of Sutton traction engine – 08 03 24a & b

1909 06 11

Coveney – Leach farmer claims motor vehicle frightened horse to death – 09 06 11

1912 07 12

P.C. Newell, stationed at Coveney, told the court he had received a complaint regarding the loss of a bottle of whisky from the Rev Turner's bedroom cupboard. It was found hidden beneath some planks in the removal van which was taking the Rector's furniture to Sutton station. A removal man said he'd discovered the bottle beneath a mattress and the Rector had said he could have it. Nobody knew where the rector was now; he had resigned the living of Coveney and left no address. Defendant was bound over to be of good behaviour for three months. 12 07 12n

1927 11 28 c

The Isle of Ely County Council intends shortly to remove the constable stationed at Coveney to Wimblington and the police station would be abolished. The Coveney beat would then be amalgamated with Witchford. They discussed suggestions that the Isle and Huntingdonshire police forces should be amalgamated, but they did not know whether one Chief Constable could be able to give the same attention to two counties as he had given in one. The County Medical Officer preferred to have a Smith Premier typewriter to any British make he had seen, but Coun. Buswell said it would not do.

1933 07 21

Coveney accident – 33 07 21

1935 12 11

The managers of Coveney Church of England School are not willing for it to be converted into a junior mixed and infants' school. But it would be detrimental to the children if they were deprived of the facilities of a senior school and if parents wanted to send their children to Ely there was nothing to stop them, councillors heard. A site for the new senior girls' school in Downham Road could be bought for £1,700 which was less than its commercial value. The Board of Education had objected to plans for the new senior school at Chatteris saying it should be a two-storey building or there would not be enough space for physical training and organised games. 35 12 11

1932 08 26

Coveney farmer fined bad condition of horse – 32 08 26b

1933 08 31

Wardy Hill fire – 33 08 31

1952 06 28

A member of the Isle of Ely County Council was accused of corrupt practices. It was alleged he had paid the landlords of the Red Lion, Three Pickerels and Cross Keys public houses at Mepal, for the expense of providing drinks to influence electors to vote at the election. Having been elected to the county council he gave them £1 to celebrate his victory, but it so happened he was also a candidate for the forthcoming Ely Rural Council election. He also gave £1 to Wardy Hill Social Club, £5 to the headmaster of Mepal school for a children's outing and 10s to the proprietor of the fish and chip shop. But it was not a way of creating an atmosphere of popularity for himself which would have an effect on voters & he was acquitted

1954 06 03

Eastern Electricity says that more villages in the Ely area are to be connected to the public supply in the next six months. Already Mepal, Coveney, Pondersbridge and Ramsey Heights have been connected and Prickwillow, Barway and outlying parts of Haddenham and Littleport will follow. But it can only be economically justified if farmers recognise that electricity be used to the fullest extent as an aid to production and not just for lighting, radio and television. It increases their output and hastens the day when electricity can be made available throughout the whole of the countryside.

1957 05 10

A farmer from Wayhead, Coveney said he'd started as a smallholder in December 1947 with two acres from his father, £10 in cash and implements lent him by relatives. He sowed an acre of sugar beet and an acre of potatoes and got on nicely making £5 a week. But he suffered bad harvests and the wheat was overrun with rabbits. He'd bought a second-hand tractor for £30 but had sold it for £5. Now he had a £500 overdraft. 57 05 10c

1958 03 07

A Coveney farmer blamed his failure on the water-logged state of Poole's Land, an area of 26 acres which he took over in February 1955. Next year it was completely flooded and he lost about £850 because of the failure of the sugar beet crop. He did not know the land was as bad as it actually was when he took over the tenancy. 58 03 07b

1958 05 22

Since May 15<sup>th</sup> ten outbreaks of fowl pest have been confirmed within a radius of eight miles of Ely in the parishes of Little Thetford, Wilburton, Coveney, Witchford and Manea. An order under the Fowl Pest Restrictions now comes into force and poultry may not be moved except under licence. The holding of poultry store markets is also prohibited. 58 05 22b

1964 04 04

A dream is coming true at Coveney. Previously social events were held in the school but higher charges were introduced and it could not be hired during holidays. Little grumbles became louder until it was decided to build a village hall. A site was secured and money raised with children collecting milk bottle tops and scrap metal. Now work has started on its construction 64 04 04

1976 07 01

Gentlemen visiting the Old Fire Engine House Restaurant at Ely may find it a little difficult to keep their minds on the menu. For the waitresses include three beauty queens, Debbie Rumbelow, who is Miss Ely; Julie Roberts, otherwise known as Miss Welney; and Linda Jakes who recently became Miss Coveney. "We don't choose our waitresses just for their

looks; we chose them for their aptitude for the work. Appearances are secondary” explained their employer Mrs Ann Wheatley.

1978 01 08 c

The impact of the tornado which unleashed tremendous energy, sufficient to rip up fully-grown trees along the edge of Newmarket cemetery and fling them about like bowling pins, was almost identical to tornado activity which occurred in May 1950 & caused considerable damage around Sutton and blew over a double-decker bus. Tornado tracks were plotted from near Hemel Hempstead, through Bedford, St Ives, Earith, Sutton, Witcham and Coveney. Cambridgeshire is a good tornado and thunderstorm region. The 50-odd destructive tornadoes in the British Isle from 1868 to 1950 were the most numerous in the eastern lowlands of England.

1979 05 20 c

Farmers were weighting up the damage caused by the worst fen blow for several years. Fierce winds whipped up the light soil but they were highly localised. The worst affected areas were at Prickwillow, Stretham, Coveney & Chatteris where there were dust clouds all around but fortunately a cloudburst dampened the fields after an hour's blowing. Elsewhere orchards took a bad buffeting. A fallen tree blocked the Harlton to Haslingfield road for several hours and another fell at Cottenham. An invalid carriage was blown from the A14 at Papworth and two motorcycles collided in the strong winds.

1986 08 25

Coveney looks the idyllic English village. Ducks waddle freely across the green, gardens blaze with flowers and there is a clear view to Ely Cathedral across the fen. But when the village school closed its doors for ever last week, it seemed like another nail in another rural coffin. These days there is no shop or pub in the village of just over 300 people and only a once-a-week bus service to Ely Market. There is no doctor or dentist's service and even the rector is shared with two other villages. Now residents have banded together in an attempt to keep their community alive 86 07 25a

